

REMARKS

Claims 1-10, 12-17 and 20 are pending in the present application. Claims 1, 9, 10 and 16 have been amended and claims 11, 18 and 19 have been canceled by the present amendment or a previous amendment. Claims 1, 3, 9, 10 and 16 are independent. Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

Reasons for Entry of Amendments

The present amendments should be entered into the official file, in view of the fact that the amendments to the claims automatically place application into condition for allowance. In the alternative, if the Examiner does not believe the application is in condition for allowance, it is requested that the Examiner enter the amendments for the purposes of appeal. The amendments to the claims simplify the issues for appeal by directing the claims to subject matter that the Examiner has indicated is allowable over the prior art. Specifically, the subject matter of objected to dependent claims 18 and 19 has been added to independent claims 1 and 10, respectively.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1, 2 and 5-8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Stafford et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,243,659 in view of Thompson, U.S. Patent No. 4,178,548 and further in view of Tsutsui, U.S. Patent No. 6,030,229. Claims 10, 12-15 and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Stafford et al. in view of Doss, Jr. et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,075,857 and further in view of Tsutsui. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

While not conceding to the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to expedite prosecution of the present application, independent claims 1 and 10 have been amended to include the subject matter of dependent claims 18 and 19, respectively. The Examiner indicated in the last Office Action that dependent claims 18 and 19 included allowable subject matter. In view of this, independent claims 1 and 10 should be in condition for allowance.

With regard to dependent claims 2, 5-8, 12-15 and 20, Applicants respectfully submit that these claims are allowable due to their respective dependence upon allowable independent claims 1 and 10, as well as due to the additional recitations in these claims.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1, 2, 5-8, 10, 12-15 and 20 clearly define the present invention over the references relied on by the Examiner. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the Examiner's rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103 are respectfully requested.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claim 3 has been indicated by the Examiner as being allowed. In addition, claims 4, 9 and 16-19 have been indicated by the Examiner as being allowable if rewritten in independent form. Applicants greatly appreciate the indication of allowable subject matter by the Examiner.

As the Examiner will note, claim 3 has not been amended. In addition, the subject matter of objected to dependent claims 18 and 19 has been added to independent claims 1 and 10, respectively. Finally, dependent claims 9 and 16 have been rewritten in independent form. In view of this,

independent claims 1, 3, 9, 10 and 16 and dependent claims 2, 4, 5-8, 12-15, 17 and 20 should be in condition for allowance.

Favorable consideration and early allowance of the present application are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

All the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed and/or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently pending rejections and that they be withdrawn.

It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the Office Action, and that as such, the Examiner is respectfully requested to send the application to Issue.

In the event there are any matters remaining in this application, the Examiner is invited to contact Paul C. Lewis, Registration No. 43,368 at (703) 205-8000 in the Washington, D.C. area.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

By 

Paul C. Lewis

Registration No.: 43,368

BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP
8110 Gatehouse Rd.

Suite 100 East

P.O. Box 747

Falls Church, Virginia 22040-0747

(703) 205-8000

Attorney for Applicant